

Church bells to ring Dec. 30 in honor of 336,000 lives lost to COVID-19

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Churches will ring bells at noon Dec. 30, during the octave of Christmas, to remember and honor the more than 336,000 people who have died in the United States from COVID-19.

These bells will ring in churches in the Boston and New York Archdioceses and in the Brooklyn Diocese. It was unknown the day prior to this event if other dioceses would also participate in response to the invitation from Msgr. Joseph P. LaMorte, vicar general of the New York Archdiocese.

“This gesture is as much a statement of faith as it is a show of solidarity with our neighbors and fellow Americans,” Msgr. LaMorte wrote in a Dec. 22 memorandum to pastors. “It is our hope that once publicized, other institutions will join in this public acknowledgement of the sanctity of the lives lost to COVID-19 in 2020.”

The invitation reached the Boston Archdiocese, where church bells rang at Easter in a similar fashion as a sign of solidarity as Massachusetts struggled to contain the onslaught of cases early in the coronavirus pandemic.

A spokesman for the Boston Archdiocese said in an email to Catholic News Service local church leaders “see this as an important moment to honor the memory of those we have lost from COVID-19.”

“There has been a devastating level of death and illness from this pandemic which continues to ravage our communities. In particular we are grateful and blessed by the incredible nurses, doctors and all medical professionals and first

responders for their expertise and dedication to care for patients and comfort loved ones,” the statement said.

“We are pleased to accept the Archdiocese of New York’s invitation in a moment of solidarity and prayerful remembrance with hope for the New Year,” it added.

In his memo, Msgr. LaMorte recalled that the ringing of church bells has been a signal to the community “that a moment of solemnity is taking place,” such as a prayer service, funeral or wedding.

He said the new effort was intended to “mourn the souls lost, to comfort the families and friends who grieve, and to move forward, together, in the hope of the blessings that await us in 2021.”

The online Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center tallied 336,529 deaths in the United States and 1,783,146 worldwide deaths from COVID-19 as of Dec. 29.